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Press Release

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL DARRELL MCGRAW SUES DELAWARE
SUBPRIME LENDER, CROSS COUNTRY BANK, ITS
COLLECTION AGENCY, APPLIED CARD SYSTEMS,
AND THEIR OWNER, ROCCO A. ABESSINIO**

Attorney General Darrell McGraw announced today he has sued Delaware-based Cross Country Bank, its collection agency, Applied Card Systems, and their founder and owner, Rocco A. Abessinio.

The suit charges that Cross Country Bank engaged in deceptive marketing of credit cards. Cross Country Bank offered credit cards with low credit limits and then charged exorbitant hidden fees to consumers who already had bad credit. When consumers contested the fees or defaulted on the accounts, they were inundated by calls from Applied Card Systems, which used a wide range of abusive collection practices to coerce consumers into making payments.

Attorney General McGraw's suit further alleges that the Abessinio-owned Applied Card Systems debited payments from consumers' checking accounts without their permission, called them repeatedly at work after they asked that such calls stop, and wrongfully disclosed debts to third parties, including co-workers and supervisors at their places of employment.

McGraw's office is asking the court to grant a temporary injunction restraining the companies from violating West Virginia consumer protection law until the final hearing in the case. The court filing includes written transcripts and videodiscs of depositions of numerous debt collectors formerly employed at the Beckley office of Applied Card Systems, which was closed last year. The former employees confirm that company management expected and required its employees to engage in the unlawful collection practices if they wished to keep their jobs.

Applied Card Systems continues to collect debts for Cross Country Bank and currently operates three calling centers, including one in Huntington, West Virginia. Last year the company closed two of its five calling centers, including centers in Beckley and Ashland, Kentucky.

Any persons wishing to file a complaint about a consumer matter or to alert the Attorney General about unfair or deceptive practices may do so by calling the Consumer Protection Hot Line, 1-800-368-8808.

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